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When The Waves Dash High

Ethel Cotton B. E.

When The Waves Dash High

AND OTHER POEMS

Ethel Cotton B. E.

SAN FRANCISCO
1918

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DEC 30 1918
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no. 1,

To

W. E. M.

Proem

In presenting the initial production of Miss Cotton's poems for exclusive circulation among her friends and students, it may be well to explain that they are not the result of the careful study and thought that such a publication should receive.

Rather are they the record of spontaneous thoughts inspired by association with her student friends, for whom they were written, and by whom they will doubtless be best understood.

If they "help to make a moment sweeter, or a weary hour less long," their end will have been accomplished.

W. E. MONAHAN.

Christmas Greetings

'Tis not that I care for you more this day,
That I greet you, Oh friend of mine,
But I just take time to tell you my love
This joyous holiday time.

Ethel Cotton Studio of Expression.

WHEN THE WAVES DASH HIGH

When the waves dash high, a thrill o'er-spreads my being;
A strange new ecstacy now permeates my will;
A new desire for life in all its meaning;
A longing in my heart I cannot still.

When the waves dash high, I feel that I am lifted
Upon the highest billow of the crest.
And buoyancy is mine, a strange new feeling,
So full of life, and yet of holy rest.

When the waves dash high, and spray is windward carried,
My thoughts, as scattered bits of fleecy foam,
Run swiftly to the end of all my dreamings,
Beyond life's limitations dare to roam.

When the waves dash high, it brings me the sensation
Of journeying in spirit far above
This mortal plain; in unknown incarnation
Where all is radiant energy, and love.

When the waves dash high, then happiness enthralls me,
As joyous as the clouds swift floating by,
I lift my soul to God in glad emotion
That thrills me; when the waves dash high.

CHEER UP

If a little gloomy shadow starts to steal across your heart,
And roseate hopes all turn to dingy blue;
If a little secret sorrow tries to make the tear drops start,
And pessimism whispers "Friends are few,"

Open wide the shutters of your clouded window-soul,
And let a little gratitude creep in;
You'll find you're rather fortunate and your life as a whole
Is a rather jolly game for you to win.

The sun is ever shining, if 'tis hid behind a cloud;
You always have the wondrous sky above;
The music of the breezes, the whispering of the leaves;
And ever someone's faith, and trust, and love.

A QUESTION

Christmas to me brings gladness rare
For all that life has given.
A happiness I fain would share,
For here and now is heaven.
My peace, my gladness yours must be;
Yours my contentment too.
This is what Christmas means to me.
What does it mean to you?

THE BLUE BIRD

A Bluebird came and tapped at the door
Of my tired heart one day,
And told me if I would make him a place
He'd willingly with me stay;
But my heart was crowded with worldly cares,
I was seeking fame with zest,
And had no time to prepare a room
For my little waiting guest.

And the wise little voice within me
Said, "The only kind of fame
That long remains must come thru love,
And 'Happiness' is its name."

Again the Bluebird called when I
Had attained the dreams of my youth,
And told me he'd come and dwell with me
If I'd welcome Love and Truth;
But the glitter of fancied triumphs,
The tinsel of worldly show,
Satisfied the heart unawakened,
And the soul that did not know.

But the wise little voice within me
Repeated the old refrain,
"You'll yearn in time for true success,
And Happiness is its name."

When years had passed and I realized
That fame and so called success
Were fleeting joys that could not bring
To the soul real happiness,
The Blue-bird returned, and whispered to me
"It is not too late this day
For me to come and reside in your heart,
Admit me now, I pray."

And the wise little voice within me,
That would not e'er depart,
Taught me the way to peace and joy
For my care-worn selfish heart.

"If you do the work that is nearest,
The thing that for you seems best,
Be it great or small matters not at all,
You may leave to God the rest.
Add the little daily service
To all of humankind,
And 'twill bring true joy within the heart,
Contentment in the mind."

And the wise little voice within me
Tells me the work that is best,
And by service of Love I find success
In a life of happiness.

* * * * *

O, restless one ever chasing
The elusive star of fame;
If life to you means selfish gain,
And you have no higher aim;
When your heart grows weary longing
For the things that you'll then hold dear,
Know you, you have only to welcome
The happiness that is here.

And the wise little voice within you
Will help you to live anew.
And in your breast, forever will rest,
A little bird of blue.

RECIPROCITY

If I have helped to make a moment sweeter,
If memory makes a weary hour less long,
If dreary day and week now glide by fleeter,
And in thy 'wakening heart dwells tender song,
'Tis only that I chanced to be the nearest
Of all Fate's messengers to rescue thee;
And open wide thy soul to all the beauty
And gladness with which Life surroundeth thee.

And yet, tho now thou art an unchained spirit,
Which evermore will liberated be,
Yet to a sacred trust thou too art promised,
That each unfettered soul now must be free.
No peace can dwell within thy inmost bosom,
While others still are blind to love's behest;
So scatter wide the germ of inspiration
Till hope springs high in every human breast.

Each has within his consciousness all beauty,
All harmony, all power, joy, and peace;
But many a heart needs kindly inspiration
To help him realize his soul's release.
So strive to know thy fellow man so truly
That thou canst help unloose restraining bar
Of fear and doubt, timidity, and worry,
'Till his freed spirit soars on heights afar.

THE SOUL—IN TUNE

In sailing over the sea of life,
Some there are who are brave
And courageously plow thru the darkest crest,
But you blithely ride the wave.

It matters not tho' the seas be high,
You joyously hoist the sail
Of Hope to your buoyant craft
And weather the stormiest gale.

When doubts o'er take you, and you seem
To be steering against the tide,
Truth ever unfurls her billowy folds,
And calmly again you glide.

Once more the tempest attacks your craft,
And again you meet the blast
By taking Love as your pilot sure,
Till you're safely moored at last.

* * * * * * *

The infinite current of life ever flows
For us all, from its source above.
We may gain its power, if our sails be Hope
And Truth, and our pilot Love.

IN FANCY'S WONDERLAND

Long years ago, in childhood days,
My parents ever thought my ways
Uncommon strange, eccentric, queer;
For things to them quite real were mere,
In my small brain, fantastic show;
Or stranger still, were all aglow
With glories, splendors dear to me,
That none but fancy's eye could see.
I could not understand
Why others could not with me share
The wondrous visions pictured there.
In our small home,
Dwelt I alone,
In fancy's wonderland.

And when they did not comprehend
My little visions, it was then
A new idea seized my brain,
That first brought joy, and later pain.
That I to them did not belong
In truth; but simply thru a wrong
And secret deed had stolen been,

From some far distant magic queen,
In mystic foreign land.
And since no filial love they felt,
For many wistful days I dwelt
On wrongs I knew,
That larger grew,
In fancy's wonderland.

When after I was made to feel
My parents were my own; and real
To me the fact came home
That I was only as their own,
A simple child, of simple birth,
Lowly my station on the earth,
Immediately a vision new
Evolved itself, and ever grew
Until the world it spanned.
No more in modest home we dwelt,
But all thru my child mind I felt
The home extend
To marvelous end
In fancy's wonderland.

Climbing the rustic loft of hay
I, to my inner self, would say
"These ruins add much to the charm
Of these vast acres, wooded farm
Of my old squire." And gazing thru
The farm yard gate, I only knew
It as the portal stately, tall,

That led into the entrance hall
Of castle large, and grand.
And every little rustic walk
Or garden path, to me would talk
Of wooers old,
Knights brave and bold,
In fancy's wonderland.

In going to my simple bed
I'd turret mount, with lofty head
Held high; as childish thought would roam
O'er this fair mansion, once the home
Of royal knight, now far away.
And we, his kinsman, here to stay
Until the wandering one returned.
And as the candle lower burned,
With childish eye I scanned
The curtains, that to me were old
Soft Persian, threaded all with gold;
And carven chair,
And grandeur rare,
In fancy's wonderland.

At morn, as I on pony sat,
(In truth, 'twas rather slow and fat),
I rode on steed with flowing mane;
And cantered thru the country lane
As ~~And~~ if but viewing the estate
Of my ancestors, proud and great.
Instead of open fields and road

Upon my steed of black I rode
On tropic fairy strand;
With tall trees waving as I passed,
And blossoms that for ever last,
Full many a mile
O'er bridge and stile
In fancy's wonderland.

A little distance o'er the hill
The ocean, restless, never still,
Surged in upon the rocky coast
That, tho' so rough, is England's boast
Of beauty, picturesque and grand.
Here, running far out from the land,
A broad breakwater stretching wide
Broke in its wrath the surging tide,
That played upon the sand.
Here for my long lost ships I'd strain
My eyes across the restless main;
And long I'd gaze
In mystic maze,
In fancy's wonderland.

* * * * * * *

Long years have passed away since then;
And life's swift conflict does not lend
Itself to dreams, or fancies dear.
Yet, still to me it bringeth cheer
To "just pretend" in dreary day

That all the work is merely play.
And homely tasks in little home
Need not debar sweet fancy's roam
In other fairer strand.
And all my busy life is made
Sweeter, for game in childhood played,
When I could dwell,
What e'er befell,
In fancy's wonderland.

THE LESSON OF CHRISTMAS

Would you know the joy of the Christmas tide
This gladsome time of the year?
Go live with the heart of a little child
And you will imbibe his cheer.

He will make a plaything of anything
He finds in his little life;
And accepts with simple glad belief
The joys, and ignores the strife.

We may learn from him how to happy be,
In spite of our rank or fame;
And all enjoy the frolicksome mood,
In playing at life's great game.

Each morn we'll look for one gladsome thing
To keep in the heart all day.
It may be a sunbeam across the floor,
It may be a child at play.

It may be the raindrops falling soft,
Or a delicate fragrant flower,
Or just the tone of a dear one's voice,
Or a smile to enrich the hour.

But in life's busy mart, or in quiet home,
We'll keep it the whole day long;
And 'twill serve as a rich sweet overtone
To sing us life's grand sweet song.

SELF-MASTERY

When life's little worries seem too much to bear,
Get a new grip on life.
When fate seems to load you with too big a share,
Get a new grip on life.
Eliminate some of the petty things you
Have always insisted you'd faithfully do;
Give up your false pride, to your good sense be true;
Get a new grip on life.

Are you letting the work you're engaged in, run you?
Get a new grip on life.
Trying to handle enough work for two?
Get a new grip on life.
There's nothing so pressing as your self-control,
If you will live for fame, why you must pay the toll,
But you can't afford glory, and sacrifice soul,
Get a new grip on life.

Have you strength left at eve to appreciate home?
Get a new grip on life.
Are you nervous, and restless, desirous to roam?
Get a new grip on life.
Don't waste too much pity on your little self,
Think more of real living than working for pelf,
You're here to enjoy life, gain friends, love and health;
Get a new grip on life.

Take time to enjoy the first beams of the sun.
Get a new grip on life.
Commune with old nature when day's work is done.
Get a new grip on life.
There's joy in the breeze, energy in the air,
God's happiness, harmony everywhere;
True friends, who're desirous their own joy to share.
Get a new grip on life.

UNDERSTANDING

I wonder, dear, if you can guess
How much you give of happiness,
In life's great heights, or moments less,
Because—you understand.

I feel it matters not with you
If I seem thoughtless, e'en untrue;
Your love ne'er wanes whate'er I do,
Because—you understand.

Some look for explanations clear
Of acts or deeds of which they hear,
And friendship bought thus proves too dear,
But you—you understand.

Such faith as yours proves all I need
To help me strive for nobler deed,
For lofty vision, love's own creed;
Knowing—you'll understand.

If I, tho' faltering, higher rise,
And ever reach God's paradise,
'Twill be that I saw thru thine eyes.
This much—I understand.

THE JOYS OF LIFE

Oh the joy of living, the wind, the earth, the sky,
The zephers softly wafted to greater worlds on high;
The pungent grass, the clover, the scent of hay, the pine;
And high o'er all on azure field the fleecy clouds recline.

Oh the joy of doing, to feel oneself athrill;
To breathe the air, to walk afield, to work with heart and will;
To witness deeds accomplished; to see the dreams ahead;
And live in active effort, nor doubt, nor drift, nor dread.

Oh the joy of knowing—to know all harmony;
To see the good in all things, the flowers, sky, and sea;
But greater far—in humankind, the germ of God I see;
When each shall, as a nautilus, come forth and all be free.

Oh the joy of loving someone who'll understand,
Who'll commune with one's own spirit and nothing false demand;
To share the joy of living, or doing, knowing too;
And know that in all journeys that soul is one with you.

FRIENDSHIP'S INSPIRATION

Do you know how little violet accepts its draught of
dew,
And lifts its head once more to azure sky?
Do you know how golden gilly-flowers their yellow
cups uphold
Receiving benediction from on high?
Thy friendship thus inspires my soul with gladness;
And lifts my heart in new desire to be
All that I craved; all that thou now believest;
And, in thy blindness, e'en now thinkest me.

TRY SMILING

If you wake in the morning without any vim
Try smiling.
If success seems to you too much trouble to win
Try smiling.
You're probably letting the years weigh you down,
Contracting your forehead, and wearing a frown.
You don't have to worry to gain you a crown,
Try smiling.

'Twill put a new vigor in each little nerve,
Try smiling.
'Twill help you to stay with the game, and n'er swerve;
Try smiling.
'Twill bring back the spring of youth into your heart,
Relax all the wrinkles, give you a new start.
You'll find from your worries you're ready to part;
Try smiling.

If you're just simply tired with the struggle each day,
Try smiling.
If from life's irritations you'd fain run away,
Try smiling.
There's naught that can happen to crush the glad soul,
No failure or worry keep cheer from its goal;
You'll emerge from the crucible sane, joyous, whole,
By smiling.

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